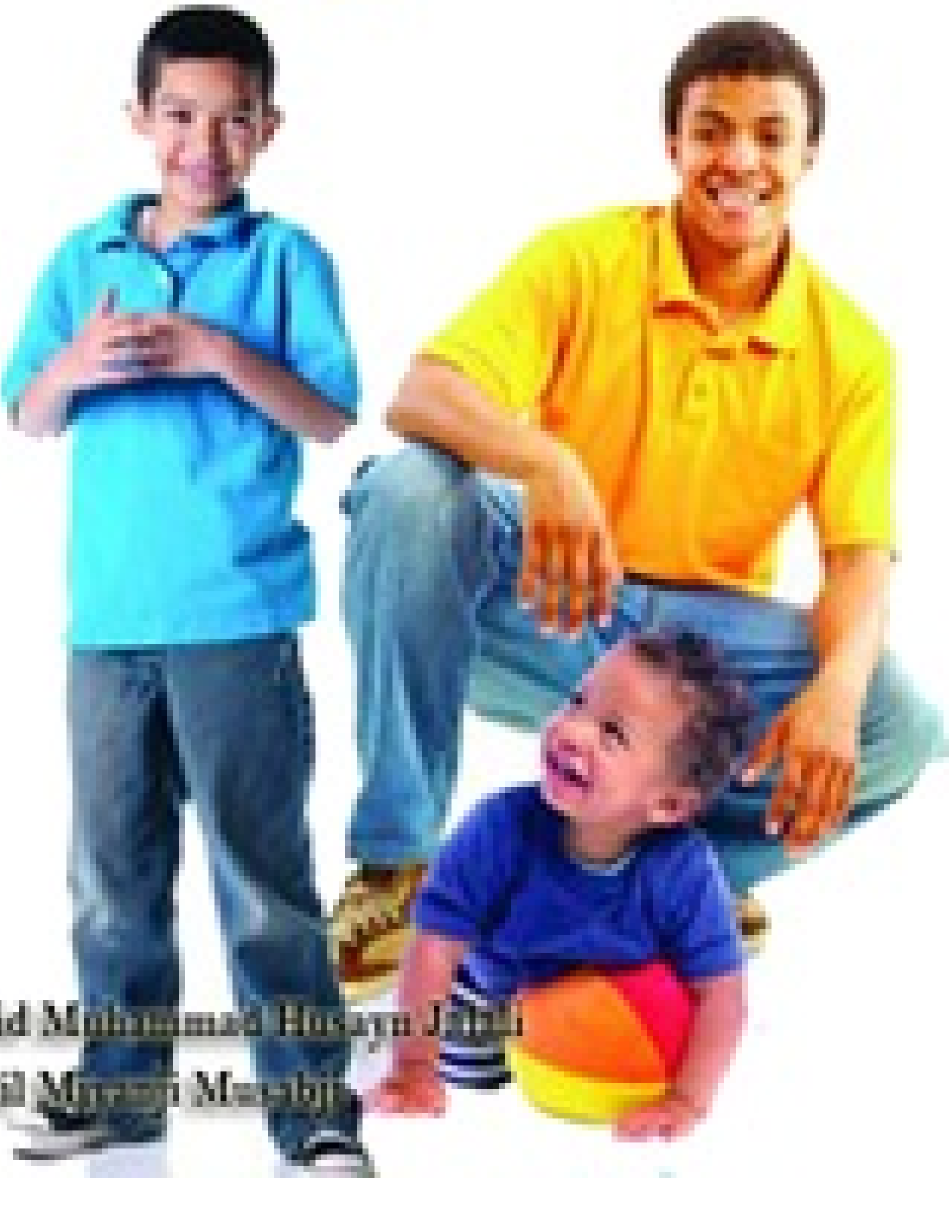
The Human Cycle



Author(s): Sayyid Muhammad Husayn [illegible]
Compiler(s): Adil [illegible]

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The Human Cycle

:Writer

Sayyid Muhammad Husayn Jalali

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point

Eighteen Lessons with Sayyid Muhammad Husayn JalaliThis text is a compilation of the notes that the author collected during lessons with Sayyid Muhammad Jalali .regarding the training and upbringing of children

Introduction

point

In the Name of Allah, the All-Beneficent, the All-Merciful

Being a relatively new father, I wanted to make sure I understood the Islamic way of raising children. Therefore, in the fall of ٢٠٠٩ (Shawwal ١۴٣٠ A.H.), I decided to call our beloved teacher, Sayyid Muhammad Husayn Jalali of the Open School in Chicago, IL. I asked him for some advice in regards to raising children as well as some specific questions concerning disciplining children. While we were discussing, Sayyid Jalali .gave me the option of taking a full class on the subject, and I took that option

Soon afterwards, I participated in one-on-one lessons with Sayyid Jalali on Sundays. The main text for the class was an Arabic text authored by Sayyid Jalali himself. He would go over passages in Arabic with me, and then we would engage in analysis and .discussion in English

Sayyid Jalali encouraged me to always think and not to accept notions blindly. The

class required that I submit a weekly written homework assignment summarizing the .respective lesson (entailing our discussions and analysis) for Sayyid Jalali's review

This book is merely a compilation of my homework assignments. The purpose of the book is to

share what I gained from Sayyid Jalali hoping that it may benefit others, nothing more. All thanks and praise is due to Allah, the Lord of the worlds.

Special Notes

۱. The main text used in the class was: Jalali, Sayyid Muhammad Husayn. Sharh al-Arba'in al-Nabawwiyah. Arabic edition ۱۹۸۷, pages ۴۱۹-۴۶۷. The original edition was published in ۱۹۷۷.

۲. I did not put in the time to appropriately or fully transliterate the respective Arabic words. For proper or complete transliteration (including appropriate markings), please refer to the Arabic romanization tables and guidelines of the U.S. Library of Congress.

۳. The ahadith (traditions) mentioned in the assignments below have been paraphrased in English to convey the respective general message. For a verbatim review of the traditions, please consult the source.

۴. In my assignments, Sayyid Jalali encouraged me to expound upon personal experiences to help me better understand the subject matter. Accordingly, in some of the assignments, you will notice some personal stories or points that I made for educational purposes.

Student

Walking through the wet

I come to wonder,

What is my position?

I am surely not a scholar,

But what if I am the

Floating scum on the water?

Lesson ۱

point

The Open School Class: Explanation of Forty Ahadith Text: Jalali, Sayyid ۱۱-۴-۰۹ Muhammad Husayn. Sharh al-Arba'in al-Nabawwiyah. Arabic edition ۱۹۸۷, pages ۴۱۹-۴۲۲.

Summary

Allah (the All-Wise) says via the Qur'an inter alia,

"O you who have faith! Save yourselves and your families from a Fire."(۱) (۶۶:۶),

Here, "families" does not only mean your kin but also encompasses anyone

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۱- Unless otherwise noted, all translations are based on The Qur'an. Trans. Ali Quli Qara'i. Elmhurst, New York: Tahrike Tarsile Qur'an, Inc., ۲۰۰۶.

connected to you. The interesting point of this verse is the order in which it addresses the believer. Allah (the All-Merciful) first mentions saving one's self, and then He mentions saving others. This makes logical sense. How can one save someone else before he saves himself? For example, if I am drowning with others, I cannot save another person who is drowning unless I prevent myself from drowning first.

In regards to saving family (e.g., one's children), there is a hadith (tradition) that says that one should play with his children until the age of seven, then for the next seven years, one should teach his children manners, and then for the next seven years, one should be a friend to his children. However, if one is to follow this paradigm, then one needs to be educated himself, which goes back to the concept that one should save himself (the first phase of salvation, while saving family and then saving society are the second and third phases, respectively).

In regards to saving one's self, we must respect other human beings and ourselves, primarily, via manners. Allah (the All-Knowing) says via the Qur'an (۲:۲۵۶), inter alia,

"There is no compulsion in religion."

We should not force others to believe something, and we ourselves should not be forced. We should obtain and spread truth and knowledge through intellect and reasoning. This is the proper path; the path of manners and self-building. Furthermore, Allah (the All-Praiseworthy) says via the Qur'an (۲:۱۹۴), inter

,alia

So should anyone aggress against you, assail him in the manner he assailed you, and“ ”.be wary of Allah

Meaning, do not exceed the limits. Do not be overpowered by emotion and revenge. One needs to control one’s self. Additionally, Allah (the All-Beneficent) says via the ,Qur’an (۲۴:۲۷), inter alia

O you who have faith! Do not enter houses other than your own until you have“ ”.announced [your arrival] and greeted their occupants

Meaning, one should say salam (peace) to others. When someone says salam to another human being, one is conveying that he is at peace with the other. Through basic principles (such as manners, respect, control, and desire for peace) one can grow. Following such wisdom from the Qur’an, one is able to struggle with one’s self :to better and, ultimately, save one’s self. The Qur’an further mentions inter alia

Say, „Who has forbidden the adornment of Allah which He has brought forth for His“ ,(servants, and the good things of [His] provision?’” : (۷:۳۲

:inter alia

,(Those who, when spending, are neither wasteful nor tight-fisted.” (۲۵:۶۷“

:inter alia

O you who have faith! Eat of the good things We have provided you, and thank Allah.”“ ,((۲:۱۷۲

:inter alia

,(O mankind! Eat of what is lawful and pure in the earth.” (۲:۱۶۸“

:inter alia

,(So eat out of what Allah has provided you as lawful and good.” (۱۶:۱۱۴“

:inter alia

,(Allah does not task any soul beyond its capacity." (۲:۲۸۶"

:inter alia

He has"

p: ۴

,(chosen you and has not placed for you any obstacle in the religion.” (۲۲:۷۸

:inter alia

,(Allah desires ease for you, and He does not desire hardship for you.” (۲:۱۸۵“

Looking at these verses and synthesizing them, one can see that Allah (the All-Wise) wants us as individuals to perform acts to purify and better ourselves. For example, adorning Allah (the All-Praiseworthy) through salat (Islamic ritual prayer) and sawn (fasting), spending money wisely and with a good heart, and eating lawful and good .foods

By knowing what to do and then doing it, one is able to better himself. Furthermore, Allah (the All-Knowing) knows that we have limitations and that we are human, and so He does not want to burden us. He allows us to perform acts based on our capacity. However, He wants us to know what to do (at our different capacities) and apply it so that we can be just to our own souls and save ourselves. ۸

Lesson ۲

point

The Open School Class: Explanation of Forty Ahadith Text: Jalali, Sayyid ۱۱-۱۲-۰۹ Muhammad Husayn. Sharh al-Arba’in al-Nabawwiyah. Arabic edition ۱۹۸۷, pages ۴۲۲-.۴۲۳

Summary

The levels of responsibility of a person include one’s self, then the family, and then the society. Focusing on the family, one must realize that each family is a part of and/or forms the society. As individuals, we live in society based on our respective families. .Even families within the animal kingdom make up the society of living beings

Humans are animals from a scientific

point of view, but there is something that differentiates human families from animal families. That something is law. Some animals may have natural tendencies or natural rules of behavior, but the laws imposed on man and his family go well beyond the .natural rules of the animal kingdom

The laws regulating family, like any other law, stem from experience. For example, looking at the history of humans, usually laws are written to prevent an act or to keep order. People do not just wake up one morning and start writing laws randomly. There has to be a reason for a law, and that reason usually is based on experiences people go through. For example, if a certain group starts practicing an act, and other people are harmed by the act or the act causes disruption, then those responsible for writing laws may create a law to prevent or regulate that act. Even religious law is based on experience. Allah (all praise be to Him) in His unlimited wisdom knows (beyond our comprehension) how human beings will interact, and He is able to setup laws for us .that take into consideration what we call experience

For example, usually, mature individuals get married. These individuals, because of their maturity, understand the concept of responsibility, which is key to marriage. Therefore, the rules and laws of marriage are grounded on concepts, such as responsibility, that a human learns through experience. In Islam, marriage is a contract (between two people – a man and

.a woman), unlike a sacrament as Christians view it

However, the marriage contract incorporates laws of justice, responsibility, respect, raising children, etc. Again, a human really appreciates the value of these laws based on experience. Because marriage is a contract, the two parties can stipulate conditions. Also, there may exist tacit or implied agreements based on culture or other conditions. When people marry, a family is born, and as mentioned above, different families make up the society. This family (marriage) needs laws to regulate it so that it .does not deteriorate. A deterioration in family is a deterioration in society

Well, there are two concepts one should comprehend when thinking about marriage and the laws of marriage. These concepts are ۱) today and ۲) the hereafter. One must understand the needs of this worldly life as well as the needs for the hereafter. One .cannot just focus on one and ignore the other

For example, when a man is looking to get married, he should choose a wife with wisdom. Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him and his family) said that when you want to get married, do not look for beauty or wealth alone, first look at religion. (Jalali, page ۴۲۳). Why? The quality of the wife (as well as the man), meaning her religious foundation, will keep the marriage strong because there is an understanding of the hereafter. If one's spouse only cares about this world, it is easy to go astray, ,but if one worries about the hereafter

.then one may struggle to stay on the right path

Also, the religious foundation of a wife will pass onto and educate the children. The real teacher of the family is the mother. A poet once wrote that a mother is the first teacher who teaches all teachers. (Jalali, page ۴۲۲). Generally, the mother will spend the most time with the children, and that is why it is crucial that the mother has a strong religious foundation. Allah (the Most High) says via the Qur'an (۲:۲۲۱), inter alia,

".Do not marry idolatresses until they embrace faith"

See Jalali, page ۴۲۳). The mother is the real heart of the family, and the family is a) cornerstone of society. That is why Islam considers the role of the wife/mother to be very important and honorable, and the role of the wife/mother is to be respected. Therefore, marrying a woman with a strong religious foundation is a great start. But it is only a start. One must maintain true Islamic teachings and rulings during the marriage. Allah (the Most Wise) says via the Qur'an (۳۰:۲۱),

"And of His signs is that He created for you mates from your own selves that you may take comfort in them, and He ordained affection and mercy between you. There are indeed signs in that for a people who reflect."

See Jalali, page ۴۲۳). Accordingly, the husband and wife should respect each other) and deal with each other with kindness, not anger. If the man does not

respect the wife, then it is natural that the wife may not respect the man. Respect, .love, and adherence to Islamic teachings will allow a marriage to flourish

Lesson ۳

point

The Open School Class: Explanation of Forty Ahadith Text: Jalali, Sayyid ۱۱-۱۹-۰۹ Muhammad Husayn. Sharh al-Arba'in al-Nabawwiyah. Arabic edition ۱۹۸۷, pages ۴۲۳-.۴۲۵

Summary

Women are considered extremely important and valuable in Islam. Actually, women were rescued and given their rights by Islam. In the time of ignorance, women were treated like property, and they did not have a voice. Islam gave women a voice and much more. In Islam, women are equal to men in value. For example, Islam does not allow one to force a woman into marriage. She must consent on her own free will. .Other rights were granted as well

For example, women were able to own property, and they also were given rights to baiyyah (pledging allegiance). Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him and his family) would visit women or women would visit him, and they were given the right to pay :(allegiance to him. Allah (the Most High) says via the Qur'an (۶۰:۱۲

O Prophet! If faithful women come to you, to take the oath of allegiance to you, [pledging] that they shall not ascribe any partners to Allah, that they shall not steal, nor commit adultery, nor kill their children, nor utter any slander that they may have intentionally fabricated, nor disobey you in what is right, then accept their allegiance, and plead for them to

.Allah for forgiveness. Indeed Allah is all-forgiving, all-merciful

See Jalali, page ۴۲۴). Women in the U.S. were not even given the right to vote until the) early twentieth century. However, some people argue that Islam oppresses women. Firstly, to truly understand the Islamic philosophy towards women and what Islam did for women, one must compare the freedoms Islam brought with other societies at the .time of the advent of Islam

If you compare how Islam viewed women to how the Roman society or the Persian society viewed women at the time, one would be amazed at the beauty of Islam and .understand that Islam came to abolish oppression of women

Secondly, some of the "freedoms" touted by certain groups nowadays regarding women are against the nature of women. In my opinion, the way current societies treat and view women is actually stepping away from freedom. For example, societies are treating women more and more as property or pieces of meat. Women are judged based on their beauty and how they dress rather than what they think and .believe. Islam is above such superficial concentration

Women are not property or pieces of meat, they are equal partners to men. Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him and his family) demonstrated how one should honor and view women. Once a king gave a woman, Mariah, to the Prophet as a gift, a piece of property. The Prophet accepted Mariah but not as a piece of property, but as a human being. He married

her, and that act of marriage symbolized the elevation of women that Islam brought. :(Allah (the Most High) says via the Qur'an (۴:۱

O mankind! Be wary of your Lord, who created you from a single soul, and created its mate from it, and, from the two of them, scattered numerous men and women. Be wary of Allah, in whose Name you adjure one another, and the wombs. Indeed Allah is .watchful over you

.(See Jalali, page ۴۲۴)

Surely, women are created as men are created, and women, generally, are equal to men in application (e.g., both men and women are obliged to pray). However, some look at Islamic practices and declare that Islam is not fair to women. Yet, these critics do not consider the totality of the circumstances. For example, the inheritance rulings of Islam give double portions of wealth to a son compared to a daughter. From a superficial look, one can say that Islam favors men because they get two parts and .women only get one part

However, Islam is a just religion, and it takes into consideration the concept of compensation. In Islam, a man is financially responsible for his wife and family. He is obliged to provide for the family while women are not obliged. Accordingly, from a fixed amount of inheritance, a woman takes less and a man takes more because he is legally obligated to provide for his family. When one looks beyond the surface, the .beauty of Islam is truly exposed

p: ۱۱

There are some issues that are considered controversial, such as hijab (a state of modesty, entailing rules for both sexes, that includes more clothing or covering requirements for women than men in certain circumstances).

However, if one believes in Islam, the philosophy of hijab, and its practical benefits, then there is no controversy. There will always be critics. Yes, Islam places restrictions on women (as well as men). However, these restrictions are placed for natural, practical, and spiritual reasons, not because Islam views women as evil or bad. Islam has never and will never have a negative attitude towards women. Women are to be respected with great care as Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him and his family) respected women.

Lesson ۴

point

The Open School Class: Explanation of Forty Ahadith ۱۱-۲۶-۰۹

Summary

In light of the discussion on women, this lesson focuses on verse thirty-four of chapter four (surat al-Nisa) of the Qur'an. Before delving into the verse, one must understand that Islam does not sponsor the mistreatment of women. Individuals may mistreat women based on their misconceptions or culture, but just because a person, who claims to be a Muslim, does something wrong does not mean Islam is wrong (e.g., Adolf Hitler claimed to be a Christian, but is it fair to blame Christianity for his actions?).

Now, there are some who pick and choose certain verses from the Qur'an to condemn Islam. However, if one really wants to seek truth, then one must analyze a subject honestly and consider the

.totality of the circumstances

For example, when reading an article or a story, one cannot truly appreciate the story or information conveyed without understanding the background or historical context. It does not make sense to read and try to understand information in a vacuum. Misinterpretation and misguidance occurs without considering context (e.g., the claims of the terrorists are based on misguidance due to the lack of understanding of context). The importance of understanding the background applies to everything, .including the Qur'an

Yes, the Qur'an is a divine book that will remain alongside the progeny of the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon them all) until the Day of Resurrection, but the Qur'an was revealed in an Arabic language within a certain context and people. So when considering legislation in the Qur'an, as in any legislation, one must understand the background of that legislation (because that background may enlighten a person .(about a goal behind that specific legislation

Looking at the background of the Qur'an, one sees that the Qur'an was revealed within an age of ignorance. Women really had no moral restrictions in their actions. Generally, they slept with multiple men even though they were married. Women would have children, but because the women had so many sexual partners, the father of the children would not be known. The physical features of the children would be compared to the women's partners to try to figure out the identity of the father. Islam came to abolish this depravity. The injunctions of Islam

applied moral restrictions to women (e.g., they can only have sexual relations with :their husbands). In this context, one must analyze the Qur'an (۴:۳۴), which states

Men are the managers of women, because of the advantage Allah has granted some of them over others, and by virtue of their spending out of their wealth. So righteous women are obedient, care-taking in the absence [of their husbands] of what Allah has enjoined [them] to guard. As for those [wives] whose misconduct you fear, [first] advise them, and [if ineffective] keep away from them in the bed, and [as the last resort] beat them. Then if they obey you, do not seek any course [of action] against .them. Indeed Allah is all-exalted, all-great

Focusing on the latter part of the verse, one sees that Allah (the Most High) tells men how to deal with their wives in regards to violation of the law. Again, in regards to context, this verse concerns women that are married (who do not want to get a ?divorce) and do not obey the law. So what can the husband do

Looking at the verse, there are three stages. The first stage is to advise or admonish the deviant wife. If that does not work, the second stage is to avoid the wife in sexual relations (e.g., if the husband is unhappy with his wife for having deviant relations, then he cannot also want to have sexual relations with her if she does not listen. That is sending mixed messages

to the wife.). If nothing else works, the last stage is to beat the wife. These stages must be followed in order. One cannot skip stages. The “beating” is physically hitting (the wife for correction purposes.(۱

However, as mentioned above, one must understand this “beating” based on the background or historical context. Over ۱,۴۰۰ years ago, if one’s wife did not want to get a divorce and she was having sexual relations with other men, what do you do? That husband, over ۱,۴۰۰ years ago, can admonish her and can also disassociate himself from her (in regards to sexual relations), but what if the wife still continues ?breaking the law

At that time, the man would have to beat her to get her back on the straight path. The whole goal of the beating at that time was to punish for correction. The goal was not to beat, it was to correct. Islam does not want husbands to go around and beat their wives. If one studies the Islamic record in its totality, one will see that Islam endorses .men to love women and treat them with respect and gentleness

So, looking at the background, one sees that the beating was only a means, and the goal was to correct. Accordingly, the question is what should husbands do now? Yes, they should admonish, and they should disassociate from the sexual relations. What about the last stage? Yes, they should correct, but the correction should not be to .physically beat the wife

p: ۱۵

Scholars debate over what the term “beating” actually means. However, a majority -۱ of scholars consider the “beating” to include physical hitting. There are maraji (jurists whom people emulate regarding Islamic legal matters) that say the beating is light .physical hitting that does not cause harm or injuries

?Why

Because nowadays, over ۱,۴۰۰ years later, the goal of correction will not be achieved by beating. Sociological factors, psychological factors, and other factors of today should be taken into consideration in regards to effectiveness. If one beats his wife, .he may end up in jail and the wife and society will consider it torture

Today, there are systems and different means in play that one can use. The key is to achieve the goal of correction, not focus on the means used over ۱,۴۰۰ years ago. One .may argue that such a suggestion is an insult to Islam or is going against the Qur'an

On the contrary, such thinking does not go against the Qur'an. The wisdom of the three stages is intact and is being followed. Only the means of old (beating) is being replaced with means that fit the present to achieve the same goal, correction. For ,(example, Allah (the Most Wise) says via the Qur'an (۲۲:۲۷

And proclaim the hajj to people: they shall come to you on foot and on lean camels" ".coming from distant places

Just because people used camels to go to pilgrimage over ۱,۴۰۰ years ago, is it wrong to use cars or planes to go to pilgrimage now? The camel was just a means for the goal of pilgrimage. If I try to go to pilgrimage on a camel today, I may never get there or may be put in jail for animal abuse. Islam is not a rigid religion. It

is a religion of wisdom, and if one means does not work anymore to achieve a goal, then another means may be used to achieve the goal. Remember, the "beating" was .only a means, not the goal

Lesson ۵

point

The Open School Class: Explanation of Forty Ahadith Text: Jalali, Sayyid ۲-۱۶-۱۰ Muhammad Husayn. Sharh al-Arba'in al-Nabawwiyah. Arabic edition ۱۹۸۷, pages ۴۲۵-.۴۲۶

Summary

What is the role towards children? In Islam, marriage entails responsibility, and one of the main responsibilities is raising children. This is not necessarily just an Islamic principle, it is a human principle. For example, every society emphasizes the importance of raising children. It is important because the children of today will be the leaders or adults of the future. Each adult member of a family was once a child that grew up, and the cyclical responsibility of raising a child falls on the shoulders of the ?respective parents. Now, what is the actual responsibility

For example, a family may hold certain values. To maintain these values for the future, the family needs to instill them into the children, who are the future. Accordingly, the responsibility is protecting values through raising the children. Values .of societies or families may differ

For example, one family may value money, and another family may value a specific cultural way of life. However, Muslim families should value religion (Islam), which entails many things, such as staying on the straight path, performing obligations, and (education. Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him and his family

.said to seek knowledge until death. Education is a cornerstone of Islam

Accordingly, it is the responsibility of the parents (especially the father) to send the children to school. The parent cannot say that I am not responsible! The father is responsible to push the child to go to school and get an education. Why? The child is the future, the future of the family, the future of the society, the future of the nation, .and so on. However, a lot of times the parents themselves are not educated

One must struggle to educate himself or herself and sacrifice (money, time, etc.) to educate their children. Islam emphasizes the importance of raising children in a correct manner. Normally, when a child is born, he or she does not know anything, like a blank slate. Customs, manners, and information are acquired via parents and society. The child adapts to the climate. At the time of birth, the child needs to be fostered with food/nourishment for her physical health as well as with manners for .her spiritual health

Unlike an animal, a human being needs to pay attention to both the physical and the spiritual. For example, a cat may steal food to survive, but a human should not steal because it is detrimental to his or her spirit. The parents must be there to foster the .children properly

Imam Ali ibn Husayn as-Sajjad (may peace be upon him and his family) said that the duty of the father towards the child

is to know that he is part of me. (Jalali, page ۴۲۶). So a father cannot say that here is my son or daughter, and he or she is not my problem. If the child does good or bad, it .reflects on the parents

There are five pillars for raising children that parents should know. Firstly, one should know that the child is a part of himself or herself (you cannot disassociate). Secondly, the parent is the responsible party (you are the adult and even if you are uneducated, you must allow for the education of the child). Thirdly, the parent must teach the child good manners. Fourthly, the parent must teach the child about faith (iman) and .(beliefs. Fifthly, the parent must teach the child how to worship (shari'ah

Prophet Muhammad (may peace be upon him and his family) said that every child is born a Muslim. (Jalali, page ۴۲۶). That means that if a person is not a Muslim, then at one point he or she changed based on influence (or lack of influence) of the parents or .society

Accordingly, the parent needs to teach their children appropriately (keeping the five pillars in mind) to raise a healthy child (both physically and spiritually). This way, the child may remain a Muslim, Insha'Allah (if God wills). However, parents should teach .their children from a young age. They cannot wait too long

Lesson ۶

The Open School Class: Explanation of Forty Ahadith Text: Jalali, Sayyid ۳-۳-۱۰ Muhammad Husayn. Sharh al-Arba'in al-Nabawwiyah. Arabic

.edition ۱۹۸۷, pages ۴۲۷-۴۲۸

Summary

Tahdhib in the context of the wise Qur'an and the ahadith (traditions) means upbringing or raising children. Islam has guidelines for raising children. The wise Qur'an (۱۸:۴۶) states,

"Wealth and children are an adornment of the life of the world, but lasting righteous deeds are better with your Lord in reward and better in hope."

Wealth in itself is not a bad thing, and Allah (all praise is due to Him) states that wealth is an adornment of this world. For example, wealth is used to feed people, to house people, to take care of oneself and family, etc.

Accordingly, wealth can be considered a good thing. However, if one cheats or steals to acquire wealth, then that, of course, is not good and is not the way of the straight path. The deeds of a person have great importance, and if one uses righteous deeds to acquire wealth, then those righteous deeds are actually better for that person than the wealth itself.

The same concept applies to children. Children are adornments of this world, but one must raise them in a good manner (e.g., do not raise them through lying or bad conduct) because the good or righteous deeds in raising children are better for oneself. Children are considered adornments because they represent an extension of the parents.

Parents can vicariously live through their children. Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him and his family) said that when a person dies hope goes away or his

good deeds cease except if i) good charity work done by that person has a continuing effect, ii) some knowledge was left behind by that person, or iii) a child prays for him. (Jalali, page ۴۲۷). These exceptions show that an extension of that person is still in this .world and, in a sense, that person is really not dead

Now, in terms of how to raise children, Islam places the responsibility on the parent to raise their children according to the respective nature of a male or a female. For example, Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him and his family) said to teach girls surat al-Nur (the twenty-fourth chapter of the Qur'an, titled the Light) instead of surat Yusuf (the twelfth chapter of the Qur'an, titled Joseph (peace be upon him)). Why? Well, surat al-Nur discusses the concept of chastity, which suits the nature of a female, while surat Yusuf mentions a sexually driven situation Prophet Yusuf (peace .be upon him) was placed in, which does not befit the nature of young girls

However, one should not misconstrue this saying to prohibit women from learning all parts of the glorious Qur'an. The saying emphasizes that one should take into consideration the nature of a child when teaching him or her lessons during upbringing. Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him and his family) also said that the .best of children are girls

This should not be used in the attempt to prove the inferiority or superiority of one sex over

the other. The beautiful saying highlights girls because there is something special about girls. You see, girls give birth and actually raise children. A mother will naturally spend more time with a child than the father. Women have a heavy responsibility, and .they are the brains of the household

Unfortunately, too many cultures and nations treat women badly. Insha'Allah (if God wills), may we all learn from the sayings of the blessed Prophet Muhammad and his family (peace upon them all) who were sent by the Lord, the Master of all the worlds. Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him and his family) said that whoever kisses his child gets a reward. Love and affection is important, and by kissing your child, you are .worshipping God the All-Merciful

Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him and his family) also said to teach your child how to swim and how to shoot arrows (archery). At first glance, this saying seems somewhat odd, but with further investigation, truth shines. For example, if one does not know how to swim and falls into water, that person will die. Swimming is a form of self rescue. Also, at the time of Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him and his .family), shooting arrows was a main self-defense technique

Accordingly, teaching your child self-defense techniques (such as maybe karate or kung fu) may be useful in saving his or her life one day. Therefore, parents should teach their children how to rescue themselves. Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon

him and his family) said that a child has rights that a father should fulfill, such as i) to pick a good name for the child, ii) to teach him good manners, and iii) paving a way for his success. One example of paving the way for a child's success is providing a good education for the child.

Additionally, Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him and his family) said to teach your child how to write (again a reference to education), and when the child becomes of age, find a wife (or spouse) for your child. Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him and his family) said when a child is born, recite adhan (call for prayer) in his right ear and iqamah (second call for prayer) in his left ear. This will protect the child from Shaytan (Satan). Also, Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him and his family) said that one should be adil (just) among his children. (Jalali, page ۴۲۸). Meaning, one should treat them fairly. For example, if you kiss one child, kiss the other child as well. Children will remember how you treated them.

Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him and his family) said when a child makes a mess, it is just a mess. Remember that you are dealing with a child, not an adult. We were all children once, and we made messes and mistakes. Treat your child as a child, do not dictate. Of course, however, as the child grows, one must instill values

and discipline based on the age of the child. Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him and his family) also said to love your children, forgive your children, and when you promise something to your children, fulfill the promise. This way, you will give self-esteem to your children.

Also, Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (the Commander of the faithful, may peace be upon him and his family) said to be careful when deciding who to hire to breastfeed your child. In the past, when a mother did not properly lactate, a wet nurse would be hired to breastfeed the child. The lesson of the saying is that such milk has an effect on a child, and the source of the milk should be analyzed to avoid any bad effects on the child. Nowadays, however, formulas and powdered milk may be used making the position of a wet nurse obsolete.

Lesson ۷

The Open School Class: Explanation of Forty Ahadith Text: Jalali, Sayyid ۳-۱۰-۱۰ Muhammad Husayn. Sharh al-Arba'in al-Nabawwiyah. Arabic edition ۱۹۸۷, pages ۴۲۸-۴۳۰.

Summary

Islam insists on good upbringing of children by any means that instills self-esteem because children are the future as well as the hope of the parents. For example, Islam insists on choosing a good name for your child. Actually, a child has a right over the parent in which the parent must choose a good name for him or her. The name given to a child does have an effect on the child.

For example, research shows that children

whose names were of lower socio-economic status than their siblings scored on average three to five percent less in exams.(۱) The name given to a child may impact how the child views himself or herself and may impact how others view the child. Look at Saddam Hussein. The name Saddam means one who beats or crashes. This name may have had a subconscious negative effect leading to the atrocities ordered by that .man

From a practical point of view, a name given to a child becomes part of the child's identity. If a child is named after a famous person, that child may be more willing to read the biography of that person and may choose, consciously or subconsciously, to adopt similar traits or characteristics. Therefore, if a name has such impact, then a good name should be selected. In some instances, when a person converted to Islam, Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him and his family) would change his name if it .were not appropriate

For example, he changed a man's name from Harb (meaning war) to Silm (meaning peace). Imam Muhammad al-Baqir (may peace be upon him and his family) said that the best names for a child are those that denote servitude to God (the Almighty), and .(the names of the Prophets (peace be upon all of them

Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him and his family) said that whoever has four children and has not named any of them after me has oppressed me. Another hadith

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۱- See http://www.brilliant-baby-names.com/SocialEffects.aspx [۱۰] (viewed on March .(۱۰, ۲۰۱۰

tradition) mentions that when Shaytan (Satan) hears someone say Muhammad or Ali,) .he withers or melts away

Imam Ja'far as-Sadiq (peace be upon him and his family) said that when a child is born to us, we keep his name as Muhammad for seven days, and then we can change it if desired. (Jalali, page ۴۲۹). Another hadith mentions that one should choose a name based on the ninety-nine beautiful names of God (the Most Merciful), such as by adding the term abd (servant), or choose a name of the Prophets or Imams (peace be upon them all), and if that is exhausted, one should choose from the titles or .(nicknames of the Prophets or Imams (peace be upon them all

Accordingly, based on these ahadith (traditions) and others, families are encouraged to choose good and positive names. Sometimes popular names become so common, families start using combined first names, such as Muhammad Ali, to distinguish children from each other. As an interesting side note regarding names, at the time of Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him and his family), using someone's kunyah .(title based on child's name) was a show of respect

For example, it was the sunnah (act) of Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him and his family) to call people by their titles, such as Abu Ali (father of Ali). This concept of kunyah also applied to women (e.g., a woman may be referred to as, for example, Umm Abbas, meaning mother of Abbas). At that time

and in that environment, if one did not call someone that is older by his kunyah, it would be considered disrespectful. Getting back to naming children, we see through social evidence as well as the ahadith that giving a child a good name is a matter of great importance. Other important early steps include reciting adhan (call for prayer) in the right ear and iqamah (second call for prayer) in the left ear of a child when she is born as well as performing aqiqah (slaughtering an animal for a newborn child) and .shaving the hair of the child on the seventh day after birth

Imam Ja'far as-Sadiq (peace be upon him and his family) said that everyone should have aqiqah done. The meat of the slaughtered animal (e.g., a sheep or ram) should be distributed as food, except to the parents. The hair cut from the child's head should .be weighed, and the weight in silver (or gold) should be given to the poor

Also, circumcision for a boy should be performed on the seventh day after birth. These are the first steps in raising a child, and all these elements contribute to the honor, chastity, spiritual life, and physical life of the child. (See Jalali, page ۴۳۰). A next important step is teaching a child salah (ritual prayer). A hadith mentions that one should tell a child to start performing salat at the age of seven and beat the child if he does not pray. Now, the historical

context of this hadith, as in all ahadith, must be taken into consideration. Over ۱,۴۰۰ years ago, beating was common to punish or discipline a child. Also, it was effective in .that environment

Nowadays, the effect of beating a child for punishment or discipline usually does not work. Actually, because of the society, environment, relationships, attitudes, and other means of discipline in today's world, the beating of a child has negative effects. For example, the child may be taken away from the parents, the parents may get in trouble with the law, the child may acquire hateful feelings or extreme fear towards the parents, etc. If the means do not work anymore, then does it make sense to use them? When reviewing the Islamic record, it is understood that the beating mentioned in the hadith is only a means, not a goal. Islam does not want parents going around beating their children. Effect and applicability must be taken into .account

Accordingly, modern punishments or means should be employed that will have the desired effects to uphold the wisdom of the hadith. So, when you read the hadith, it would be fair to substitute the word "punish" for the word "beat." Getting back to the wisdom of the hadith, salat is stressed because it is so powerful. It impacts both one's spiritual and physical life. For example, one needs to take time out of the day and prepare herself to perform salat properly, and there are physical restrictions during .the salat

Accordingly, physical discipline is mixed with a spiritual experience. This has an important impact on a human being. People that practice salat at an early age are protected from deviation, and even if they deviate, the seed of salat helps them come .back

Lesson ۸

point

The Open School Class: Explanation of Forty Ahadith Text: Jalali, Sayyid ۳-۱۸-۱۰ Muhammad Husayn. Sharh al-Arba'in al-Nabawwiyah. Arabic edition ۱۹۸۷, pages ۴۳۰-.۴۳۲

Summary

If you see your child misbehaving, how do you deal with it? Well, generally, there are three approaches. In one approach, you can just let it be and not do anything. This is an easy way out and usually leads to an undisciplined or spoiled child. Another approach is to use force. Unfortunately, many adults naturally lean towards slapping or hitting their children for quick results without fully understanding the consequences of our time. The best and hardest way to deal with the situation is to educate and/or .negotiate with the child

For example, if the child does not want to do his or her homework and just wants to play, you can try to explain the importance of homework and maybe entice him or her with a reward. Also, there is nothing wrong with being stern to instill values and discipline. Sometimes being stern is important to avoid spoiling the child. Now, .occasionally, punishment must be used, such as in last resort cases

However, in Islam, there are guidelines that should be followed. Imam Ali (peace be (upon him and his family

said to raise your child with patience and never beat him more than five times. (Jalali, page ۴۳۰). Also, while addressing school children, Imam Ali (peace be upon him and his family) said that let your teacher know that if he beats you more than three times, I am going to punish him.

First and foremost, negotiations and reasoning must be used with children at a starting point, and punishment, such as the beating mentioned in the ahadith (traditions), is a last resort. Now, why does the Imam put a short limitation on the beatings? If you are going to use a method or tool to obtain a specific effect, and after using that method or tool for a while, that specific effect is not achieved, does it make sense to continue the use of such?

Even psychology experiments show that if you try to train a dog or animal using a technique and that technique does not work in a relatively short time period, then you have to try a different approach. If you continue to beat a child several times over, then one is no longer using the beating as a means of correction, but the beating becomes a tool of anger, revenge, and/or hostility. The children are not punching bags for adults to let out their stress.

Look how Imam Ali (peace be upon him and his family) treats and respects children. He addresses them specifically as individuals with rights. If the teacher does not respect those rights,

the Imam said he will punish him. What a profound and daunting statement. We .should think before we raise our hands to hit a child

Actually, Imam Ja’far as-Sadiq (peace be upon him and his family) said that you cannot spank or beat a child for something that is not haram (forbidden or unpermitted according to Islamic law). Why beat at all? Well, as explained in previous lessons, one must take historical context into account. Beating was merely a means, not the goal. Today, beating may not be necessary as there may exist a slew of punishment means for correction that may be more effective without causing resentment, fear, and/or hatred (as created within children in today’s society due to a .(number of factors

As good Muslims and parents, we should also focus on acts of affection towards our children. For example, we should give gifts to our children. There are ahadith that mention that giving gifts to your children is like giving charity or freeing a slave. Also, .there is a hadith (tradition) stating that one should give gifts to girls first

However, one should be cognizant of not exceeding the limits. Parents should not spoil their children and should not instill materialism. It is the parent’s duty to raise a good individual. Parents should always advise and teach their children. Allah (the All-Wise) provides great points for parents to teach their children in the Qur’an (۳۱:۱۳ and ۳۱:۱۶-۱۹). In these verses, Allah (the All-Generous) speaks of how the

(honorable Luqman (may we reach his level) advised his son.(۱

At least eleven points of wisdom, (Jalali, pages ۴۳۱-۴۳۲), can be extracted from these :verses

i) Never associate anything with God. Generally, there can be two types of shirk (polytheism). One type is actually worshipping idols or statues, and the other type is when you seek help from someone other than God and you believe that the other being is really the source of the help or power. Yes, we seek doctors and others for worldly help, but they are only means. The true help is the Lord, the Indescribable .Source

.ii) Whatever God wants to happen, will happen

.iii) God knows what you do, and He is All-Aware

.iv) Never miss prayer. Proper salat (prayer) will help keep you on the straight path

.v) If you see something that is right, say that is right and follow it

.vi) If you see something that is wrong, say that is wrong and avoid it

.vii) Be patient

viii) Do not beg from anyone/Be modest in your bearing. Meaning, keep within due .bounds and observe reasonable limits regarding your behavior

ix) Do not be proud of yourself and do not think you are better. Pride is a downfall. Do .what you have to do and be thankful

.x) Do not walk exultantly or like a braggart

.xi) When talking, use an appropriate voice and do not yell

.((Indeed the ungainliest of voices is the donkey’s voice.” (Qur’an (۳۱:۱۹“

These are points of guidance

۱- For more information on the honorable Luqman, see Majlisi, Allamah Muhammad Baqir. Hayat al-Qulub. Vol. ۱. Trans. Sayyid Athar Husain S. H. Rizvi. Ansariyan Publications, Second Reprint ۲۰۰۷, pages ۴۱۳-۴۲۷.

and wisdom we should all teach our children. Insha'Allah (if God wills), may we, as .adults, also understand and follow these principles

Lesson ۹

point

The Open School Class: Explanation of Forty Ahadith Text: Jalali, Sayyid ۴-۸-۱۰ Muhammad Husayn. Sharh al-Arba'in al-Nabawwiyah. Arabic edition ۱۹۸۷, pages ۴۳۲-.۴۳۵

Summary

As said before, children are the future. Insha'Allah (if God wills), one can raise a child in a proper manner to become a good mature member of society. The age of maturity may be relative to the society in which one lives. For example, in the United States, the age of eighteen seems to be the threshold of maturity. In Islam, however, the legal ages of maturity for males and females are identified by jurists,(۱) and, also, physical features may be considered when determining maturity. When a child ?reaches maturity, what is his or her role towards society

A person will become independent in thought and will have to identify his or her role in society. For example, a person will start thinking about what profession he or she should pursue. However, despite whatever the person chooses, bringing peace and safety to one's society is the main goal. A person in a society wants to be in a safe and peaceful environment to live his or her life and raise a family, and so that person's role .should be to promote stability and peace

Through our professions and way of living, we should contribute to society and make sure our actions foster a

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For example, Sayyid Ali Sistani and Shaykh Yusuf Sane'i indentify the age of fifteen -۱ as the legal age of maturity for a boy (absent any prior physical signs of maturity), but

Sayyid Sistani identifies the age of nine (see www.sistani.org [١١]) as the legal age of maturity for a girl while Shaykh Sane'i identifies the age of thirteen (see www.saanei.org [١٢]) as the legal age of maturity for a girl (absent any prior physical signs of maturity). Please note that the ages discussed herein correspond to lunar years.

positive environment. For example, how should we live here in the United States? Should we go around breaking laws? If we do, we will be put in jail and disrupt not only the society but our families as well. This does not mean we agree with everything the government does or that we like every law.

However, we can try to change laws and attitudes through rational processes and techniques. Islam is a religion of reason, and the objective is peace and security. Yes, Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him and his family) fought in wars, but a study of those wars will show the necessity of such for defense and to fight against oppression.(۱)

You see, the objectives of war can be to protect and vanquish oppression so that peace and security may be established. The objective of terrorism, on the other hand, is only to instill fear. And even if one argues that terrorists may use fear only as a means for whatever they want, that is not Islam.

Extremism is not the middle road or the straight path of Islam. This is evident by the beautiful acts of the Prophet of Islam towards the different peoples and even his enemies. For example, by studying the agreement between the different inhabitants of Madinah after migration as well as the Treaty of Hudaybiyah, one can see that Islam guides people towards peace and security.(۲)

Actually, Shaykh Ja'far Subhani in his biography of Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him and his family)

۱- See Subhani, Ja'far. The Message. Trans. Muhammad Fazal Haq. Islamic Seminary, ۱۹۸۴, pages ۳۶۶-۵۰۶. ۴۱

۲- See Subhani, pages ۳۴۰-۳۴۴ and ۵۲۹-۵۳۰.

mentions that Imam Ja'far as-Sadiq (peace be upon him and his family) stated, "No event during the life of the Prophet of Islam was more useful than the Peace Pact of (Hudaybiyah."(١)

Accordingly, whatever path a person chooses to walk, that person should have the goal of bringing or inviting peace and security to that society. If you are a good neighbor and live peacefully with people, then people tend to like you and accept you. However, if you do not bring peace to a society, people will not like you. That is why terrorists are rejected by society. There is no valid system in the whole Universe that does not aim at establishing security and peace. Islam has certain guidelines for .establishing these goals

For example, one can start by having good manners, akhlaq. By people and families exhibiting good manners, the society can run peacefully in a positive way. These good manners or practice of virtue may deal with all parts of one's life (e.g., how to talk, walk, sit, joke, treat people, etc.). One can learn about these manners from the numerous books of akhlaq. Also, the Wise Qur'an has verses dealing with good .manners

:For example, the Qur'an (٢۴:٢٧-٢٨) states

O you who have faith! Do not enter houses other than your own until you have announced [your arrival] and greeted their occupants. That is better for you. Maybe you will take admonition. But if you do not find anyone in them, do no enter them until

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Subhani, page ۵٣۶. ۴٢ -١

you are given permission, and if you are told: „Turn back,' then do turn back. That is more decent for you. And Allah knows best what you do. The Qur'an (۵۸:۱۱) further states, inter alia, "O you who have faith! When you are told, „Make room,' in sittings, .(then do make room; Allah will make room for you." (See Jalali, page ۴۳۲

Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him and his family) said that the best of you is the person who has the better akhlaq. (Jalali, page ۴۳۳). Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (peace be upon him and his family) said that associate with others so that when you die .people will cry for you and when you leave them people will miss you

Imam Ja'far as-Sadiq (peace be upon him and his family) said that you should curb your tongue (including not delving into personal matters of others) and do not talk rubbish. Imam Ja'far (peace be upon him and his family) also said that a person who cannot control himself when angry is not a Shi'ah (follower of Ahlul Bayt, the People of the House). We have to deal with all people in the proper manner regardless of their .race, color, sex, etc

However, one should always consider a person's taqwa, God-consciousness. Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him and his family) said that there is no scale except taqwa. (Jalali, page ۴۳۴). There are good people and there are bad people. There are good Indians, and there are

bad Indians. There are good Arabs, and there are bad Arabs. We should not generalize. Look at a person's character. However, just because someone does not display good character does not mean we should lower ourselves and treat him or her inappropriately. No, we should always act with decency and proper behavior (which .(may be relative to the situation

Yet, sometimes avoiding or dissociating from someone that displays bad character is the proper thing to do. Also, we should not only focus on the character of other people, but we should first try to achieve and maintain a high level of taqwa ourselves. ,The Qur'an (۴۹:۱۳) states, inter alia

Indeed the noblest of you in the sight of Allah is the most Godwary among you." ".Indeed Allah is All-Knowing, All-Aware

Lesson ۱۰

point

The Open School Class: Explanation of Forty Ahadith Text: Jalali, Sayyid ۴-۱۵-۱۰ Muhammad Husayn. Sharh al-Arba'in al-Nabawwiyah. Arabic edition ۱۹۸۷, pages ۴۳۵-.۴۳۸

Summary

In conjunction with taqwa (God-consciousness), there exists ilm (knowledge) and amal (practice). For how can we be conscious of God (the Almighty) if we do not have knowledge, and what is the point of having knowledge if we do not act upon it? The Qur'an stresses the importance of knowledge (ilm). For example, the Qur'an (۵۸:۱۱) ,states, inter alia

Allah will raise those of you who have faith and those who have been given" ".knowledge in rank

,Also, the Qur'an (۳۹:۹) states, inter alia

'?Say, „Are those who know equal to those who do not know"

".Only those who possess intellect take admonition

Knowledge has different levels and degrees. There are those who are more knowledgeable than others. Also, some types of knowledge may be better or more beneficial than other types of knowledge. Knowledge is essential for every civilization. Without knowledge, a society cannot survive, let alone move forward. Islam insists on ?acquiring knowledge. Regarding the Qur'an, what were the first verses revealed

Read in the Name of your Lord who created; created man from a clinging mass." Read, and your Lord is the most generous, who taught by the pen, taught man what .((he did not know." (Qur'an (۹۶:۱-۵

So, one should acquire knowledge as much as possible. This knowledge does not have to be just religious knowledge. Any knowledge that brings benefit is important. However, as said before, some types of knowledge may be better than other types of knowledge, and it is only natural that knowledge that can benefit one in this life and the hereafter will have greater importance than knowledge that merely benefits one in this temporary world. Ilm helps one come closer to Allah, the Lord of the worlds, in a .(metaphysical sense. (Jalali, page ۴۳۶

For example, one needs to know what is right and what is wrong. Also, when one acquires knowledge, the beauty of this world (our existence) and its complexities naturally become apparent, which may strengthen one's connection with God, the All-Wise. For example, when I was studying physics and engineering, I became aware of

some of the magnificent physical theories, laws, and relationships of the Universe, and that made me truly realize that Something must be in charge of all of these things. It does not make sense that this Universe is a product of randomness. There is ,no limit in acquiring knowledge. The Qur'an (۱۲:۷۶) states, inter alia

We raise in rank whomever We please, and above every man of knowledge is one" ".who knows better

We should always try to learn more. Furthermore, following any creed without knowledge is haram (forbidden) in Islam. The Qur'an (۵:۱۰۴) states

And when they are told, „Come to what Allah has sent down and [come] to the" Apostle,' they say, „Sufficient for us is what we have found our fathers following.' "!?What, even if their fathers did not know anything and were not guided

One cannot just say my ancestors or family did this and so I will also do this. What if it is completely wrong and against Islam? No, one must break the chain of ignorance by acquiring knowledge (of course, issues of conflict with family must be dealt with in a respectful manner and with wisdom and tact). The ahadith (traditions) also stress upon the topic of knowledge. They mention that whoever has knowledge is rightly .(guided and that whoever does not know may go astray. (Jalali, page ۴۳۷

Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him and his family) said that it is a duty to seek knowledge. He also said to learn from

those who know. Additionally, Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him and his family) (said, “Strive to acquire knowledge from the cradle to the grave.”(۱)

From a personal point of view, knowledge and education have truly benefited my family. My grandparents were poor farmers in India. My father told me that when he was young, sometimes there was not enough food to eat. However, my father was able to get an education and become a pharmacist. Eventually, he had an opportunity to come to the United States to practice pharmacy, provide for his whole family, and properly educate his children. The education he acquired allowed him to do all of this. .All praise is due to Allah, the All-Generous

Today, I am able to provide for my family because of the education I received, the education my parents worked hard for to provide for me. Without education, I am not sure where I would be. I may have been in India struggling to get by. I know other people who did not pay much heed to education, and they always tell me that they regret not studying because of the lack of opportunities or obstacles they are facing. Now, please do not get me wrong. I am not saying that being a farmer or living a certain type of lifestyle is bad and that one should become educated only to live .comfortably

Actually, Allamah Tabataba’i identifies ahadith regarding the virtues of farming.(۲) For example, Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him and

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۱ - Tabataba’i, Muhammad Husayn. Islamic Teachings: An Overview. Trans. R. Campbell. Alavi Foundation, ۲۰۰۰, page ۱۵۸. ۴۷

۲- See Tabataba’i, page ۱۹۶. ۴۸

his family) said that "A Muslim who plants a tree or grows a crop of which people, birds (and grazing animals eat receives the reward for almsgiving."(1)

All I am saying is that education was able to benefit my family. Even if you want to be a farmer, be an educated farmer. Why? Because knowledge will help you be a better farmer. For example, you may learn how to grow better crops or you may learn how to farm more efficiently. Or, you may truly appreciate farming and be thankful to God .while some other farmers may still be stuck in their ignorance and superstitions

Acquiring education or knowledge does not only mean getting a degree (e.g., students may sleep in their university classes and not study, but as long as they pay their money and get a piece a paper at the end, they apparently are qualified as educated). One can read, study, ponder, and learn without entering the business world of modern academics. You see, knowledge, as mentioned before, has many levels and types. Knowledge can be used to benefit oneself and/or others in this material world, knowledge can help oneself to fight off superstition and ignorance, and knowledge can help one get closer to Allah (the Most High). No matter what you do, acquire .knowledge

Lesson 11

point

The Open School Class: Explanation of Forty Ahadith Text: Jalali, Sayyid 10-22-4 Muhammad Husayn. Sharh al-Arba'in al-Nabawwiyah. Arabic edition 1987, pages 438-(.439

Summary

The duty of an individual is not only to

1- 49. Tabataba'i, page 196

acquire ilm (knowledge) but to also act upon the ilm. Amal (practice) is an essential factor. What is the point of knowing something if you do not follow or use that knowledge? For example, if you know that a specific substance in front of you is or contains poison, it would not make sense for you to ignore that knowledge and drink .the substance anyway

One can be the smartest person, but if he does not act upon the knowledge acquired, he is nothing or something worse than nothing. Even if you have great religious knowledge, you can go astray if you do not practice what you know. Look at Shaytan (Satan)! Practice is a second factor (knowledge being the first) when evaluating a society and/or the individuals thereof. (Jalali, page ۴۳۸). The Qur'an (۱۶:۹۷) states, inter ,alia

Whoever does good whether male or female and he is a believer, We will most" (certainly make him live a happy life."(۱

Accordingly, one who has faith and performs good deeds will live a happy life. What does this mean? I have seen pious people that do many good deeds, but they are still poor and do not have big houses or fancy cars. Why? A happy life does not mean just having material possessions or achieving worldly goals. A happy life is when one is truly content. For example, a rich person may always be worried about his money, and when someone comes to talk to him, he may be thinking

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۱- The translation is based on The Qur'an. Trans. M. H. Shakir. Elmhurst, New York: Tahrike Tarsile Qur'an, Inc., ۱۹۹۹. I chose to use this translation instead of the translation of Ali Quli Qara'i because he translates the verse as, "Whoever acts righteously, [whether] male or female, should he be faithful, - We shall revive him with a good life." The word "revive" may give the impression that the "good life" concerns .only the afterlife, but the "good life" includes the life of this world

that this person is here for only money (always worrying). You can have everything in this world and still not be happy. Allah (the All-Wise) says to do good deeds while having faith to be truly happy. Whether you are rich or poor, the feeling of true (contentment is a great achievement.(١

Please note that the truths of science do not contradict Islam. Man may discover ١۴ the beauty of the Universe, but only Allah (the All-Merciful) can create such a Universe. The truthful discoveries of science actually reinforce the power and .greatness of God, the Almighty

,Furthermore, the wise Qur'an (٩:١٠۵) states, inter alia

And say, „Go on working: Allah will see your conduct, and His Apostle and the faithful" ".[[as well

These three are watching you, and so believe and do good work. Work, as opposed to laziness, is a duty upon each individual to bring blessings to his or her society. Islam strongly condemns laziness. If you do not work and just eat, you are not better than an animal. Please note that "work" has a broad meaning and does not only mean going to a modern job. Mothers that stay home and raise children may "work" harder .than their husbands that go out to make money

Nevertheless, the long lasting success of a nation generally depends on the hard work of its people. For example, the societies that discovered and utilized natural principles and laws (such as in physics and chemistry) benefitted greatly from the hard

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It is important to note that Shaykh Nasir Makarim Shirazi indicates that the "good -١ life" or "clean life" mainly refers to the afterlife, based on the online version of the Quran, Translation, and Commentary in Brief. Trans. Mansoor Aminy, volume ٣ (viewed on April ٢١, ٢٠١٠ at http://www.makaremshirazi.org/english/compilation/book.php?bcc=٢٣۶٢ itg=... [١٣]). Apparently, Shaykh Shirazi says that the verses ninety-five to ninety-seven were

revealed after a man came to complain to Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him and his family) about a neighbor, Amr al-Ghais, who stole some land. In this context, the commentary states, “When faith and righteous deeds are accompanied in a man or a woman, God's Grace will revive them to a new clean life which is of course eternal.” However, the commentary goes on to state, “The advantages of such a life in terms of the life to come is immense, while its very good consequences in this pres[en]t life too, is evident in the believer's clean, pure, sure, and comfortable living.” .This last part conforms with the analysis above

,work of their scientists.(۱) The Qur'an (۱۸:۳۰) states

As for those who have faith and do righteous deeds – indeed We do not waste the" ".reward of those who are good in deeds

,Also, the Qur'an (۵۳:۳۹-۴۰) states

A]nd that nothing belongs to man except what he strives for, and that he will soon be]" ".shown his endeavour

,The Qur'an (۹۹:۷-۸) further states

So whoever does an atom's weight of good will see it, and whoever does an atom's" .(weight of evil will see it." (See Jalali, page ۴۳۹

Accordingly, everyone has to strive to work and do good deeds with faith. Of course, the striving and the work are relative to an individual's capabilities and situation. For example, no one expects a layman to perform life saving medical procedures or deduce Islamic rules like a mujtahid (an expert given permission to interpret the Qur'an and the traditions to form Islamic rulings). Everyone should strive to work based on their own level. Of course, one should educate themselves and acquire .knowledge to reach higher levels. You see, ilm and amal are tied together

Lesson ۱۲

point

The Open School Class: Explanation of Forty Ahadith Text: Jalali, Sayyid ۴-۲۹-۱۰ Muhammad Husayn. Sharh al-Arba'in al-Nabawwiyah. Arabic edition ۱۹۸۷, pages ۴۳۹-(.۴۴۲

Summary

When talking about amal (practice), what kinds of practice are important? Well, let us take a closer look at the concept of work. As Muslims, we should not be aloof or lazy; we should work. We should not expect to receive everything and

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۱ - Please note that the truths of science do not contradict Islam. Man may discover the beauty of the Universe, but only Allah (the All-Merciful) can create such a Universe. The truthful discoveries of science actually reinforce the power and greatness of God, the Almighty.

,do nothing. (Jalali, page ۴۳۹). The wise Qur'an (۵۱:۲۲) states

".And in the sky is your provision and what you are promised"

What does this mean? The verse conveys the message that everything (in terms of provisions) is out there if you look for it. Do not say there is nothing. For example, fish will not walk to your house, but you can go to the sea or lake to catch fish (they are out there). Also, in regards to the blessed Maryam (peace be upon her and her family), the ,Qur'an (۱۹:۲۴-۲۵) states

Thereupon he called her from below her [saying,] "Do not grieve! Your Lord has made" a spring to flow at your feet. Shake the trunk of the palm tree, freshly picked dates will ".drop upon you

The dates were not automatically placed in her hands or mouth. No, she had to shake the tree. One must work! All Prophets (peace be upon them) tended to flocks or were shepherds at one point in time. (Jalali, page ۴۴۰). This was a type of work for them in their respective communities. Also, Prophet Adam was a peasant (agricultural worker), Prophet Idris was a tailor, Prophet Nuh was a carpenter, Prophet Hud was a businessman, and Prophet Muhammad was a caravan manager (peace be upon all of them and their families). Furthermore, Imam Ja'far as-Sadiq (peace be upon him and .(his family) entered into fair partnership-like financial transactions (mudharabah

Companions of the Prophet and the Imams (peace be upon

them and their families) also shared a similar work ethic. For example, Salman al-Muhammadi weaved carpets. Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (peace be upon him and his family) said that you cannot gain anything in life by just sitting and wishing. He said that you have to drop the bucket in the well, and sometimes you may get a little water .and sometimes you may get a lot of water

One must work to progress. Now, I must stress again that work is not just the concept of leaving the house to go to the office and collecting a pay check (e.g., a person may go to an office and also may not do much work). Work is of many varieties. For example, a wife and/or mother that makes meals and feeds her family and manages a house is doing great and vital work. Imam Muhammad al-Baqir (peace be upon him .and his family) said that work is worship

For example, supporting ones family by working is fulfilling an obligation, which is worship. Also, Imam Ja'far as-Sadiq (peace be upon him and his family) used to do some gardening type work and someone asked the Imam to let him (the other .person) do the work

The Imam said no as long as I am able to do the work because I want to be close to Allah (the Most High). Imam Ali, the Commander of the Faithful, (peace be upon him and his family) said that never be lazy because

if you are lazy, you may be lazy with God (the All-Merciful). Imam Ali as-Sajjad (peace be upon him and his family) said that you should do your work as if you will live forever, and you should do for your afterlife as if you will die tomorrow. Why? Well, .focusing on the first part, when you do work for this life, do it properly

For example, if you are going to fix your house, fix it so that it will not fall apart the next day. This has many advantages, such as physical betterment and stability or security as well as other positive effects. Personally, when I vacuum the house sometimes, I may not clean every corner or vacuum under certain objects (maybe because I am tired). However, I do feel the difference between doing a full complete job in vacuuming versus when I do not do such a good job. Firstly, the house does not look as nice or is not as clean when I do not put in the full work, and, secondly, I do not .feel as satisfied

When someone does something, that person's work product represents that person in a way. As Muslims, we should do the best job at everything we do because our work represents ourselves, our character. When Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him and his family) was burying his son, Ibrahim, the Prophet looked in the grave and saw a pit in a corner. In order to level it, he smoothed

the surface with his own hands and said, “Whenever anyone of you does a job he should endeavour to do it in a solid way.”(1)

By doing something properly, we are trying to better ourselves, which may bring us closer to the Lord, the All-Beneficent. Of course, one should not get infatuated with materialism and work for the sake of mere aesthetic and worldly pleasure (because one may get addicted to material goals that may lead him astray). In Islam, all (no matter gender, race, nationality, etc.) are responsible to do some work and progress within the limits. (Jalali, page ۴۴۱).

Imam Ja’far as-Sadiq (peace be upon him and his family) said to never be lazy and never complain. So, do your work (whatever it may be to help yourself, your family, and your society) and be thankful to Allah, the All-Gracious. Unfortunately, a lot of us do not want to do any work, and we just want to complain all day. That is not Islam. Every individual is a product of his or her work.

For example, someone (such as a parent or teacher) may guide you, but you have to put in the time and work in the end. If you do not read or listen, how can you learn? Also, the work you do or the lack thereof may have an impact beyond yourself. For example, if you ignore your child and do not teach her certain values and etiquettes (meaning, you do not do your

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۱ - Subhani, Ja’far. The Message. Trans. Muhammad Fazal Haq. Islamic Seminary, ۱۹۸۴, page ۷۱۸.

work in raising the child), it reflects poorly on you and you have done a great disservice to the child (which may cause the child, you, and the community great .(pains

Lesson ۱۳

point

The Open School Class: Explanation of Forty Ahadith Text: Jalali, Sayyid ۵-۲۰-۱۰ Muhammad Husayn. Sharh al-Arba'in al-Nabawwiyah. Arabic edition ۱۹۸۷, pages ۴۴۲-(.۴۴۵

Summary

From the concepts of ilm (knowledge) and amal (practice) stem a lot of responsibilities for a Muslim. One of the main standards a Muslim should maintain is the character of being easy (not difficult). Everyone in life faces difficulties and discomfort, but one should not let the difficult situations make him or her difficult. In the language of our ".time, we say, "Take it easy

For example, if you have an arrangement with someone else and for some reason the other person does not show or perform but gives a valid excuse, then accept the excuse and take it easy. If you do not, it is really bad for you. Your blood pressure .increases, you get angry and may say or do something you will regret, etc

For example, look at Imam Husayn (peace be upon him and his family). In the beginning, Hurr diverted the Imam and his companions based on his orders, and then at the end, Hurr decided to join Imam Husayn's camp. Now, Imam Husayn (peace be upon him and his family) was always easy with Hurr. When Hurr came to the Imam's camp and apologized, the Imam did not

scold him or become furious. No, the Imam kindly asked him to sit, but Hurr felt obligated to fight right away. If we were in the Imam's situation, would we act like that? Keep calm. If your spouse is shouting at you, do not shout back. One can diffuse many problematic situations just by taking it easy. Islam has insisted on taking it easy. .((Jalali, page ۴۴۲

Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him and his family) said that I was sent by God (the Almighty) with a religion that is easy and pure. Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him and his family) also said never be stubborn (because the other side might have a point) and that always be easy with people whether they are near (relatives) or far (in terms of relation). This kind of thinking and way of life was and is trying to .destroy the tribal mentality as well as trying to build-up an individual

When looking at Islam, one sees the principles of manners, forgiveness, kindness, etc. The qualities of a Mu'min (believer) include not being stubborn, always keeping his or her promises (meaning you can trust him or her), and not intentionally bothering other people. The principle of being easy is well founded in Islam, and there are at least three ways or means for easiness. For example, ۱) giving (money, time, knowledge, work, etc.), ۲) piety or taqwa (God consciousness), and ۳) agreeing with whatever is good. The Qur'an (۹۲:۵-۷) sums it up by

,stating

As for him who gives and is Godwary and confirms the best promise, We shall surely“ ”.ease him into facility

If you follow these principles, then life will be easy for you and you can maintain ,easiness with others. However, on the other hand, the Qur’an (۹۲:۸-۱۰) states

But as for him who is stingy and self-complacent, and denies the best promise, We“ ”.shall surely ease him into hardship

Easiness is a blessing of Allah (the All-Merciful). There are people who are always worried about every little thing. They may have nice cars, but they are always worried if those cars will be stolen or scratched. Even if someone says salam (Islamic greeting of peace) to them, they become worried asking themselves, “What does he want now?” What kind of life is that? No, one needs to be patient and at ease. The Qur’an :(۴۱:۳۴-۳۵) states

Good and evil [conduct] are not equal. Repel [evil] with what is best. [If you do so,] behold, he between whom and you was enmity, will be as though he were a sympathetic friend. But none is granted it except those who are patient, and none is .granted it except the greatly endowed

.(See Jalali, page ۴۴۳)

,Forgiveness is also very important in regards to ease. The Qur’an (۷:۱۹۹) states

Adopt [a policy of] excusing [the faults of people], bid what is right, and turn away“ ”.from the ignorant

Generally, always forgive. Forgiveness is great for many reasons, and if you do not

forgive, you really bother yourself. Allah (the All-Wise) addresses Prophet Muhammad :((peace be upon him and his family) as stated in the Qur'an (۳:۱۵۹

It is by Allah's mercy that you are gentle to them; and had you been harsh and hardhearted, surely they would have scattered from around you. So excuse them, and plead for forgiveness for them, and consult them in affairs, and once you are .resolved, put your trust in Allah

Here, forgiveness and consultation are stressed. Consultation embraces the idea of inclusion versus exclusion. Even if you do not follow the advice of others, the simple fact of including them makes a significant difference in situations. Inclusion may solve many problems, and exclusion may cause many problems. Also, forgiveness brings .(love and affection between individuals, family, and society. (Jalali, page ۴۴۴

Looking at the ahadith (traditions) from Prophet Muhammad and the Imams (peace be upon them all), one can see the significance of being easy. For example, Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him and his family) said that if you cannot give people .(money, at least have a happy face (do not frown

Prophet Muhammad also said that if someone comes with an excuse, accept it, and he also said that a person who takes it easy gets along with others. One does not have to agree with someone else, but that person can be easy with others. Imam Ja'far as-Sadiq (peace be upon him and his family) said that if someone is good and does

.something wrong, forgive him

Also, Imam Sadiq said that to make your deeds ma'ruf (good or accepted) you should ۱) not comment on them (meaning, do not mention them or bring them up even if it is something big you did; because when you make your deed appear small, it is truly large), ۲) make it easy for the other person (meaning, if someone asks you for help, help them in such a way in which you do not place difficulty on them), and ۳) do it right .(away. (Jalali, page ۴۴۵

Lesson ۱۴

point

The Open School Class: Explanation of Forty Ahadith Text: Jalali, Sayyid ۵-۲۶-۱۰ Muhammad Husayn. Sharh al-Arba'in al-Nabawwiyah. Arabic edition ۱۹۸۷, pages ۴۴۵-.۴۵۱

Summary

One of the greatest gifts Allah (the All-Merciful) has given mankind is prayer. Now, there is ritual prayer (salat) that involves specific actions and sayings to be performed, and then there is du'a (call or supplication). The du'a or call to God (the All-Hearing) really has no conditions except true sincerity or purity. Du'a is a direct link or direct call to the Lord of all things. Meaning, the connection is between you and Allah (all glory be to Him). Yes, people may use different means to reach God, but the call or .worship is still directed to God

For example, one may ask Prophet Muhammad, the Imams, or any other Ma'sum (infallible being, peace be upon them all) to pray for him/her or ask from Allah (the All-Powerful) on his/her behalf, but the Ma'sum

is just a means of purity, which Allah (the All-Hearing) has provided as a mercy. It is God, and only God that is the Ultimate Provider. We do not worship the Ma'sum, but we may use their purity just as a means when ۶۴

calling God (the All-Merciful). To further elaborate, people go to places of great purity to do du'a. For example, during Hajj (Islamic pilgrimage) or ziyarat (visit), people make du'a at holy places, like near the Ka'bah. One can take advantage of the purity of the place to make a sincere call to the Lord (the Master of all). Of course we do not worship the Ka'bah; we worship the One God. Allah (the All-Wise) states via the Qur'an (۲:۱۸۶), inter alia,

"When My servants ask you about Me, [tell them that] I am indeed nearmost. I answer the supplicant's call when he calls Me."

Du'a is very powerful. Besides experiencing many occasions in which God answered my calls for help (such as asking for help in school and work and asking for better health for my loved ones), I also know many people that tell me personal stories in which they make du'a and their wishes are fulfilled. For example, one brother told me that when he was in Hajj, he wanted something during tawaf (circumbulation) and he made du'a for it, and he swears that his du'a was answered right away.

However, the main question is why does Allah (the All-Wise) not answer every du'a

of mine? For example, in ۲۰۰۶, my wife and I were determined to go for Hajj. We prayed and made du’a that we both can perform this great obligation and mercy. We paid the money, we packed the bags, and we were ready to get together with the other members of the Hajj group. The night before we were to go to the airport to .begin our journey, we received a call from the group

We were told that our ۶visas were not obtained and that, actually, someone stole them. This was a devastating blow. The group decided to cancel the entire Hajj trip, and we tried our utmost to get on another Hajj group. We prayed and prayed for something to work out, but we were too late and we did not go for Hajj. My wife and I discussed why this did not happen for us. One theory is that maybe we were not ready. You see, Allah (the All-Knowing) sees things that we do not see. He knows what is better for us. The Lord sometimes does not answer our call because maybe we are not ready or what we ask for is not right for us, such as at that moment. There is a hadith (tradition) that states that the fastest or quickest reply from Allah takes forty ?years. What does this mean

You see, Allah may not answer you right away because you might need to grow first .before you get what you asked for

My wife does say that she feels more mature now and that she may appreciate Hajj .more now than before

Of course, there could be many other reasons why Allah does not answer or delays His answer (e.g., Allah may want to test us, what we ask for may not be good for us, there may be something better, we may not be sincere enough, and/or other reasons - some we can comprehend and some that may be beyond our comprehension). For example, Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him and his family) said that if you want your du'a to be answered, then purify your food and work. You see, there may be a lack of purity and/or sincerity on your part in which Allah (the All-Merciful) may .not accept your call until you purify yourself

In another theory, my wife and I thought that maybe we did something wrong, and that is why we did not go to Hajj. May Allah (the All-Gracious) make us aware of our wrong doings so that we can correct them. There are certain things one can do to increase purity and sincerity in regards to making du'a. (Jalali, page ۴۴۹). For example, when making du'a raise your hands for supplication, start and end with salawat (invocation of peace upon Prophet Muhammad and his family), say Ya Allah ten times, and your intention should be clear and you should not have hypocrisy in your heart (no .(matter what you receive

Also, whatever Allah chooses

for you accept it, do not delay prayer (salat), and give charity. Furthermore, there is a beautiful hadith (tradition) from Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (peace be upon him and his family) in which someone asked him why his du'a was not answered and Imam Ali said that you know Allah but you do not obey Him, you know the messenger but you do not follow him, you know the Qur'an but you do not follow it, you feel the fire of Hell but you do not prepare to avoid it, you want to enter Paradise but you do not prepare to enter it, you receive favors but you are not thankful. If we are truly sincere (just not with our tongues, but with our whole being), then Allah (the All-Merciful) may answer .us

Du'a is truly a spiritual experience. It is one of the best remedies, and it gives comfort. For example, if you are stressed and worrying about many things, you can use du'a as a stress reliever. Personally, when I am upset or worried, I like going to a quiet area in my house to make du'a. I open up to the Lord and have an intimate moment. By doing this, I truly feel more relaxed afterwards. Just knowing that God is there listening to .me really brings me comfort

Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him and his family) said that du'a is the essence of worship. He also said that whoever does not know how to

do du’a is a loser. Additionally, Imam Ali (peace be upon him and his family) said that who does du’a but does not act is fooling himself. So worship Allah by doing du’a, but act accordingly to be worthy of receiving an answer. In connection with the concept of ,du’a, there is the concept of dhikr (remembrance [of God]). The Qur’an (۷:۲۰۵) states

And remember your Lord within your heart beseechingly and reverentially, without“ ”.being loud, morning and evening, and do not be among the heedless

You see, when you remember Allah (the All-Beneficent) you become calm and relaxed. When one gets nervous, that is when Shaytan (Satan) attacks. Remember Allah to keep control and to be in a comfortable state. Now, what does it mean to remember the Lord? Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him and his family) said .(that whoever obeys Allah, he is in remembrance of Allah (the All-Generous

Imam Ja’far as-Sadiq (peace be upon him and his family) said that I do not say, ‘Do not say Subhan’Allah (All-Glory be to God),’ but the essence of dhikr is when you have the choice to obey Shaytan, to obey yourself, or to obey the Lord and at that time you .choose to remember Allah

How many times have we sat down with the tasbih beads (prayer beads or beads used for remembering or glorifying God) and used our tongues to try to remember Allah, and then after we put the beads away we do not follow the

commands of God in our daily activities? In addition to reciting tasbih, May Allah (the All-Powerful) gives us the strength to remember Him properly by obeying His merciful .commands and recommendations

Lesson ۱۵

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The Open School Class: Explanation of Forty Ahadith Text: Jalali, Sayyid ۶-۲-۱۰ Muhammad Husayn. Sharh al-Arba'in al-Nabawwiyah. Arabic edition ۱۹۸۷, pages ۴۵۱-.۴۵۴

Summary

The Qur'an is a revelation sent by God (the All-Mighty) to Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him and his family). Muslims believe that the Qur'an is the last revelation to ,(mankind. Allah (the All-Praiseworthy) says via Qur'an (۳:۴-۵

He has sent down to you the Book with the truth confirming what was [revealed]" before it, and He had sent down the Torah and the Evangel before as guidance for ".mankind, and He has sent down the Criterion

The Qur'an brings a message of guidance and social justice. With no discrimination based on gender, race, nationality, age, etc., Allah (the All-Wise) says via Qur'an (۵:۱۵-,(۱۶

Certainly there has come to you a light from Allah, and a manifest Book. With it Allah" guides those who follow [the course of] His pleasure to the ways of peace, and brings them out from darkness into light by His will, and guides them to a straight path." ۷۰

Now, the Qur'an, like the Old Testament, includes several verses of law. When I was younger, I had a hard time understanding how the Qur'an can have verses of peace, forgiveness, mercy, and brotherhood and, at the same time, have verses of

harsh punishment, such as flogging and cutting of the hand (fingers). My first reaction was that the scholars are misinterpreting the verses and such "cruel" punishment is .not possible in Islam

However, as I grew and read more, it became clear that the verses did relate to severe punishments. I did not truly appreciate the significance of such verses until I studied American criminal law. Every society that wants to progress must enforce criminal laws to keep the society safe from danger and corruption. For example, India may have many laws, but a lot of times those laws are not enforced or are circumvented, and because of this, India is still experiencing a lot of corruption and .(bribery on many levels (which prevents the growth and good health of the society

Now, truly understanding the conditions required for the respective punishments(۱) the ways or means of enforcing Islamic laws of punishment, and when to apply such laws (if at all during the Major Occultation) is beyond me, but I do understand why the Qur'an includes them. They are practical in maintaining social justice (which is a mercy for the society). Also, the existence of the laws or enforcement thereof is a strong deterrent and may also help in rehabilitating criminals (e.g., through tough punishment, they may see and adhere to the right path). The truth is that the revelation of the Qur'an has changed humanity. Whether you are a Muslim or not, you cannot deny the impact of Islam. For

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۱- After reviewing some of the numerous identified conditions required for respective criminal punishments, I realized that they entail a great deal of mercy. See Shirazi, Sayyid Abdul Husayn Dastghaib. Greater Sins. Trans. Sayyid Athar Husayn S.H. Rizvi. .Qum, Iran: Ansariyan Publications, Second Reprint ۲۰۰۷, pages ۲۳۷-۲۳۹ and ۴۲۰-۴۲۳

example, of all the communities as a whole (not certain individuals) that converted to Islam, how many of those communities have reverted back to their old ways? Societies are adhering to Islam and the Qur'an, and this is a sign of the existence of truth. The Qur'an (۱۷:۸۸) states,

Say, "Should all humans and jinn rally to bring the like of this Qur'an, they will not bring the like of it, even if they assisted one another."'

This is a tremendous claim. I thought about this a lot, and with no disrespect to the Qur'an, I challenged my faith with some straight forward questions. I first asked, what is so special about the Qur'an in terms of language and expression? One can look at the Qur'an as a mere book. In light of such questions, Sayyid Khu'i gives a beautiful explanation of the miraculous quality of the Qur'an.(۱)

For example, at the time the Qur'an was revealed, the expert poets and masters of language were shocked and at awe by the beauty, symmetry, and language of the Qur'an. This shows that there is something extraordinary about the Qur'an and it must have come from a Special Source. Ok, but what about now? Why is it not possible for someone to make verses similar to the Qur'an? One can change some words around or paraphrase the Qur'an using modern language techniques. However, this is just imitation, not creation or bringing the like of the Qur'an. If someone plagiarizes a paper and just

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۱ - Khu'i, Sayyid Abu al-Qasim. The Prolegomena to the Qur'an. Trans. Abdul Aziz Sachedina. Qum, Iran: Ansariyan Publications, Second Reprint ۲۰۰۷, pages ۶۹-۸۱.

.changes some words, then that product is not truly an original work, it is just a copy

Also, every word of the Qur’an has a special and deep importance, and so even changing a word would make the imitated work an inferior product. Furthermore, the Qur’an has many levels (such as outer and inner levels). One may try to imitate the external language, but the deeper and hidden truths will still be beyond him or her. Our knowledge is dependent on what Allah (the All-Knowing) allows us to know. If Allah does not allow us to know the deeper and higher levels of knowledge, it is not possible for us to even try to express such knowledge. Also, the Qur’an contains truths that may be beyond our comprehension, and so how can we ever bring the like .of it

Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him and his family) said that whoever searches for salvation without the Qur’an is astray. The right path is the Qur’an. For example, ,(we recite so many times daily, Qur’an (۱:۶-۷

Guide us on the straight path, the path of those whom You have blessed – such as“ ”.have not incurred Your wrath, nor are astray

This is universal and applies to everyone. You can break down every action in life into the three categories: ۱) the straight path, ۲) the path of those who go astray, and ۳) the path of those that incur the Lord’s wrath. For example, if I wanted to make money

to support my family, I can find Islamically permissible work (a straight path), or I can find work that involves bad acts or is harmful (going astray), or I can avoid work and just steal for the rest of my life (incurring wrath). In every little action, one must find the straight path and take it (i.e., knowledge and action). As Muslims, we should read ?the Qur'an every day. But, how should we read

Imam Ja'far as-Sadiq (peace be upon him and his family) said that I do not like someone who reads the Qur'an in less than one month. (Jalali, page ۴۵۳). Why? One can answer the question with another hadith (tradition) from Imam Sadiq (peace be upon him and his family). He said that the Qur'an should not be read fast but, rather, should be read with pondering and meditation. It is important to not just move our .tongues to make the sounds but to also comprehend and think

When I was younger, I memorized some of the shorter chapters of the Qur'an so that I can recite them during salah (Islamic ritual prayer). Arabic not being a native language for me, I was just happy to be able to pronounce the chapters in a halfway decent manner. One day I thought to myself that I should really know what I am saying. Standing before the Lord (all praise is due to Him) and reciting without understanding did not seem right. Accordingly, I forced myself to understand the

.meanings of the chapters I memorized via English translations

Truthfully, when I started praying with the understanding of the words, my prayer felt more sincere and I felt more content. If we believe that the Qur'an is truth and guidance, then we must ponder and attempt to comprehend it for our own benefit. Furthermore, there are some etiquettes and recommendations when reading the Qur'an. (Jalali, page ۴۵۴). For example, ۱) be pure (in heart and body), ۲) recite ista'adhah (seeking Allah's protection from Satan) before reading, ۳) recite basmalah ("In the Name of Allah, the All-Beneficent, the All-Merciful") before reading, ۴) ponder while reading, ۵) do du'a (supplication or call to God (the All-Merciful)) after you finish .reading, and ۶) read with a good voice

Lesson ۱۶

point

The Open School Class: Explanation of Forty Ahadith Text: Jalali, Sayyid ۱۰-۹-۶ Muhammad Husayn. Sharh al-Arba'in al-Nabawwiyah. Arabic edition ۱۹۸۷, pages ۴۵۴-.۴۵۹

Summary

Looking at the concepts of bir and ihsan, one can conclude that both relate to obeying God (the All-Mighty). Piety or righteousness are usually used to define bir, but one can associate bir with dealing with people in a good manner. Also, ihsan means virtue or to do beautiful things which includes not retaliating if someone does something wrong to you (e.g., if someone is mean to you, be kind to him). Dealing with people in a good manner and not retaliating helps to establish happiness in life. The wise Qur'an (۵:۲) " ,states, inter alia

Cooperate in piety and Godwariness, but

".do not cooperate in sin and aggression

Imam Ja'far as-Sadiq (peace be upon him and his family) said that bir and ihsan cause prosperity. (Jalali, pages ۴۵۴-۴۵۵). For example, when I was a child and became angry at my parents for not buying me a toy while shopping, I would run and go hide somewhere in the store. My parents would fervently look for me, and I would cause .them great heartache

I would make their life miserable at that moment. Now just imagine if adults acted like that towards each other. Meaning, they do not deal with each other nicely and they treat each other with aggression. They would be so stressed and not at ease. From a physical point of view, people may get high blood pressure and other health problems, which would lead to the shortening of one's life. This is not prosperity. Accordingly, bir and ihsan can make one's life longer (by the grace of Allah, the All-Merciful) because one may not get as irritated or nervous throughout life. Now, this does not apply only to the home or family life. If you are just and good with your neighbors, they are more .likely to be just and good with you

If a first community is just and good with a second community, the second community will probably be just and good with the first community. If nation A is just and good with nation B, then nation B will probably be just and good with nation

A. This is only natural. Do good for yourself in this life (and the hereafter) by being good to others. The Qur'an (۱۷:۷) states, inter alia,

"If you do good, you will do good to your [own] souls, and if you do evil, it will be [evil] for them."

Furthermore, the Qur'an (۲۸:۷۷) states, inter alia,

"Be good [to others] just as Allah has been good to you."

The Qur'an (۳۱:۲۲) also states, inter alia,

"Whoever surrenders his heart to Allah and is virtuous, has certainly held fast to the firmest handle."

The Qur'an ۷۷ (۲۷:۸۹) states,

"Whoever brings virtue shall receive [a reward] better than it; and they shall be secure from terror on that day."

Additionally, the Qur'an (۶:۱۶۰) states, inter alia,

"Whoever brings virtue shall receive ten times its like."

The Qur'an (۳:۹۲) also states, inter alia,

"You will never attain piety until you spend out of what you hold dear."

So be good with others and give real charity. We may give away things that we no longer want or like (such as old clothes), but how many times do we give, in charity, things we hold to be more valuable (such as brand new clothes)? I knew a man that attended a celebratory meeting. In this meeting the man received some food, which was his favorite food. He could not stop talking about this food; he really loved it. He decided to take it home to enjoy it with his family. On his way home

he met a beggar on the street. Now, this beggar was always on this particular corner .(and the man could have just given him some money (as he sometimes did

No, this man gave him all the food (not just a little bit). This man who loved this certain food (which he received as a celebratory gift) truly showed charity because I know he really wanted to take that food home (he talked about it all day before he ran into the beggar). Additionally, there are six points to act on to help achieve prosperity. (Jalali, page ۴۵۶). The points are ۱) believe in Allah (the All-Mighty), ۲) give money in His cause, .۳) pray, ۴) pay zakat, ۵) if you promise, keep it, and ۶) be patient

In regards to promises, you do not have to make a promise, but if you make one, make sure you follow through. This applies to everything and everyone. For example, if your child is not behaving and you promise her some chocolate to calm down, make sure you give her chocolate if she calms down. Someone I know told me that when he was a child, he would call his own mother a liar if she forgot to fulfill her promise. Children know a lot, and we should encourage good behavior and set examples by .fulfilling our promises

Furthermore, Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him and his family) said that helping a Muslim is more important than fasting one month. He also

said that all people are the children of Allah, and if you want to be close to Allah, help the children of Allah. Imam Musa (peace be upon him and his family) said whoever helps a believer really is helping the Prophet and the Ahlul Bayt (People of the House).

Sometimes we focus on ritual acts of worship (which are good), but we then forget about helping others. We should engage in helpful acts, large and small. When I was young, I saw Muslims praying and saw some of those same Muslims trying to get ahead in a line and not opening or holding doors for others (and this really bothered me).

Since I was a child, I think simple acts of help (like holding the door open for someone) are very important and need to be stressed more in our community. When I see anyone (not just a Muslim) performing acts of kindness and help, I truly feel something warm within. By doing small acts of help, we can build up a strong nature of helping, in general, within ourselves. We cannot live in a society and be isolated. We must be part of a brotherhood and sisterhood. Imam Sadiq (peace be upon him and his family) names seven points as a base for any relationship.

They are ۱) love for him (your brother or sister) what you love for yourself and hate for him what you hate for yourself (meaning, be fair and considerate), ۲) do not make

him angry, ۳) help him (however, do not interfere where you should not), ۴) you should be a mirror for him (meaning, if he is doing something wrong or harmful, let him know in a kind way. Be a true brother and friend), ۵) you should not be full while he is hungry (or thirsty or needy), ۶) if you have a helper, let your helper help him, and ۷) if he asks you for help, be there to help him (you do not have to burden yourself to a great degree, but help as much as you can. For example, if he needs help, you can tell him .(that you have work but you will stop by after work.). (Jalali, pages ۴۵۸-۴۵۹

.If we can act on these points, it will be good for us, individually and as a community

Lesson ۱۷

point

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Summary

As humans, we should always be aware of the scales of justice. If you ask a dictator why he is oppressing people or doing a certain "evil" action, he will always give you a reason or justification. He will say that he is not doing anything wrong. However, everyone else may clearly claim that he is definitely committing atrocities and wrong ?doings. How do we know what is right or wrong

This is very difficult, and we must keep the concept of the scales of justice

in the forefront. Islam identifies rules to assist us. For example, Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him and his family) said that you wish for that person what you wish for yourself. In other words, put yourself in the other person's shoes. This forces you to know your limits. Everything has limitations, and one should never exceed the limit. For example, as a parent, when you see your child misbehaving, you want to .admonish him or correct his behavior

Sometimes a parent may get very emotional and start using excessive language or force (e.g., uncontrolled beatings or very harsh yelling). Now, if the parent, at that moment, stopped and asked himself or herself, what if the roles were reversed and I was this child? Would I like to be hit this many times or be yelled at in such a manner for this minor misconduct? No, of course the parent would not want to receive this reaction. If the parent really ponders, he or she will understand that the limit has been .exceeded and that this is not justice

In another example, let us say person A did something wrong to person B or caused him harm. Then later on, person A felt really bad and went to ask person B for forgiveness and tried to compensate for the wrongdoing. What if person B is stubborn and does not forgive person A? Person A would feel horrible, and he would carry such a tremendous pain. That is why one should

put himself in the other's shoes. Yes, person A did something wrong to person B or violated his right. However, person B would want to be forgiven if he was in the shoes of person A. Right? It is only natural and just. In all cases, the scales of justice must be in front of us. The Qur'an (۴۹:۱۳) states:

O mankind! Indeed We created you from a male and a female, and made you nations and tribes that you may identify yourselves with one another. Indeed the noblest of you in the sight of Allah is the most Godwary among you. Indeed Allah is all-knowing, all-aware.

Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (peace be upon him and his family) was the personification (or reverse personification) of the scales of justice. Imam Ali said that it is not enough that you call me the commander of the faithful and I do not know how the people are living. He used to worry about whether the people in the remote desert were hungry because he was in charge. How many of our current leaders are like this? Leaders of great nations will hold lavish dinners for other leaders but not lose sleep over the poor and hungry of their own nation. In regards to the scales of justice, there are three points to keep in mind: ۱) do the right thing without any tiredness (meaning, if you see something right, go after it. You must have a clear vision on what is

.right

From a legal point of view, doing taqlid (emulation) to a mujtahid (jurist) (if you are not a mujtahid yourself) assists oneself in understanding the right path.), ۲) do not grab on people (meaning, do not put pressure on people. For example, if you want to raise money, ask the people. But if you put people in a difficult situation and do not give them options, the pressure you are exerting may get you some money, but that person will probably not want to see you or talk to you anymore.), and ۳) do not show .(off (your alleged good deeds will be void if you do). (Jalali, page ۴۶۰

Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him and his family) said that the best aql (intellect or reasoning) is to do a good thing whether it is for a person that is good or bad. Listen, we are not the police. Many times we will say that this person is good or this person is bad without even knowing any details. If a person is sick (whether you think he is bad or not), help him. You would want him to help you if you were sick.(۱) In regards to doing something good, the Prophet and Imam Muhammad al-Baqir (peace .be upon them and their family) said do it immediately

In regards to giving money, Imam Ali (peace be upon him and his family) said do not say what is my small amount of money going to do. Meaning, do

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۱- In certain cases one should avoid or disassociate from a certain person to distance oneself from wrong doing and to avoid supporting evil or sin. However, on a human level, if a person is hungry, sick, or requesting help regarding a basic need, there is justice and beauty in attending to that need. For example, looking at the lives of the Ma'sumin (infallibles, may peace be upon them all), there are many cases in which great personalities fed or attended to the sickness of a person that committed harm to them and their families, and many times that person turned to Islam or became .less rigid because of such kindness

not say let the rich pay because your amount will not really have an impact. No, you must do your part. It does not matter if your amount is small or large. Remember, piety is found in quality, not mere quantity. There is another hadith (tradition) that says that you have to be very gentle in communicating with others. Also, Imam Ali (peace be upon him and his family) said that if you take revenge, the best revenge is to forgive. This is very hard to do, but this, like the other traditions, points out basic .concepts that embody the scales of justice

,The wise Qur’an (۵۳:۳۹) states

”.A]nd nothing belongs to man except what he strives for]“

,Also, the Qur’an (۹۱:۷-۱۰) states

By the soul and Him who fashioned it, and inspired it with [discernment between] its“ ”.virtues and vices: one who purifies it is felicitous, and one who betrays it fails

Imam Ali (peace be upon him and his family) said that all of you are from Adam (peace be upon him), and Adam was from dirt. (Jalali, page ۴۶۴). Meaning, we are all going to die one day, and the only thing that will remain are our deeds. We must be just in our .actions, because that justice will allow us to succeed

This discussion of justice reminds me of a childhood event. When I was in middle school (I was about thirteen years-old), I remember a day when the teacher was .handing back our graded exams

One student reviewed his exam and discovered that the teacher made a mistake in counting the points. Actually, the teacher gave the student too many points. Now, this student had to decide whether to keep quiet and keep the high score or to tell the teacher about the mistake. If he told the teacher, the teacher would probably lower the score. This student decided to tell the teacher the truth. The teacher was so surprised and happy with the student's honesty, the teacher did not reduce the score and told the student that he deserved the extra points. This student, at that moment, embodied or used the scales of justice. He knew what was right and acted upon it (even though he might "harm" himself in regards to his class grade), and his act of justice was rewarded. Being just is not only the right thing to do, it is advantageous for us. We enter this world and leave this world within a relatively short period of time. If .we are just during this time, it will benefit us beyond our comprehension

Lesson ۱۸

Point

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Summary

Law and rules are part of all communities and societies. The many countries and nations of this world all have their own laws. There are even tribal laws and laws amongst thieves (e.g., do not steal from each other). Shari'ah (Islamic law) and other

laws are the same in concept. The only difference is the source. For example, secular law stems from the people's opinion (such as via Congress or a founding body), but .(shari'ah stems from revelation of God (the All-Wise) and ahadith (traditions

Islam gives people freedom, but this freedom has limitations. One aspect of shari'ah is to help people identify these limitations. In the United States, people say that there is freedom of speech. Ok, there is a certain "freedom" of speech, but there are also limitations. The case law provides a plethora of examples where public good or other .reasons are stated to limit speech in certain situations and places

The U.S. laws also give other freedoms but not without limitations. Look, there is a reason jails and penalties exist. You cannot just do anything you want. You have to follow the rules of the country, state, city, etc. In Islam, the same concept applies. (Islam gives the basic freedoms of ۱) life, ۲) will, and ۳) work.(۱

However, these freedoms have limitations. Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him and his family) said that the dunya (world) has to be a prison for you. What does this mean? Should we live in a jail cell? No, but we have to know our limitations. We surely .are being tested in this world, and the Lord (the All-Merciful) has sent us guidance

Within this guidance, we find the guidelines of shari'ah. A lot of the limitations of .shari'ah must be self-imposed by Muslims

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When considering freedoms, one must be cognizant of the fact that Allah (the All- -۱ Powerful) is always in the picture. He is integral to everything and continually sustains .us and the Universe

For example, once I met some engineers for work. One of these engineers was born and grew up in Iran, but now he works and lives in the United States. In a relaxed tone, he told me that he drinks alcohol. He was not worried about getting caught and harbored no fear. Should one avoid sin because of the fear of government or the fear of God (the All-Beneficent)? Whom do we worship? We should always be cognizant of .the fact that Allah (the All-Knowing) is always watching

We must not exceed the limits and we must restrain ourselves to be just to our own souls and for the love of God (the All-Praiseworthy). The following are verses from the Qur'an that beautifully convey truths that are relevant to this discussion: (۲:۲۵۶), inter ,alia

,(There is no compulsion in religion: rectitude has become distinct from error." (۷۶:۳"

,(Indeed We have guided him to the way, be he grateful or ungrateful." (۱۰:۹۹"

,inter alia

,(Would you then force people until they become faithful?" (۴۹:۱۳"

O mankind! Indeed We created you from a male and a female, and made you nations" and tribes that you may identify yourselves with one another. Indeed the noblest of you in the sight of Allah is the most Godwary among you. Indeed Allah is all-knowing, ,(all-aware." (۳۰:۳۰

So set your heart on the religion as a people of pure faith, the origination of Allah" according to which He originated mankind (There is no altering Allah's

creation; that is the upright religion, but most people do not know.)” (See Jalali, pages .(۴۶۴-۴۶۵

Accordingly, we should willingly embrace shari’ah and do our utmost to follow the laws daily. However, when it comes to application and following the rules, there are seven conditions one should keep in mind: ۱) maturity (everyone is responsible when he or she becomes mature), ۲) aql (intellect or reasoning; an insane person is not responsible), ۳) not being feeble in a particular situation or subject, ۴) willingness (one must not be forced), ۵) intention, ۶) should not bring harm (e.g., the act should not bring harm to someone else), and ۷) the act should be possible (meaning, being able to .(materialize). (Jalali, page ۴۶۶

Generally, these are basic conditions that apply to Islamic worship, ethics, and transactions. Allah (the All-Wise) sent us the last Prophet, Prophet Muhammad and .the Imams (peace be upon them all and their family) as guidance

Today I have perfected your religion for you, and I have completed My blessing upon “ .((you, and I have approved Islam as your religion.” (Qur’an (۵:۳

All in all, we have been given Islam, including its regulations, as help or assistance. If we choose to follow the laws, then it will benefit ourselves in this world and the hereafter. And if we can help ourselves, then we can help our families (such as our .children) and others

.((O you who have faith! Save yourselves and your families from a Fire.” (Qur’an (۶۶:۶“

About center

In the name of Allah

هَلْيَسْتَوِيالَّذِينَيَعْلَمُونَوَالَّذِينَلَايَعْلَمُونَ

?Are those who know equal to those who do not know

al-Zumar: ۹

:Introduction

Ghaemiyeh Computer Research Institute of Isfahan, from ۲۰۰۷, under the authority of Ayatollah Haj SayyedHasanFaqihImami (God blesses his soul), by sincere and daily efforts of university and seminary elites and sophisticated groups began its activities .in religious, cultural and scientific fields

:Manifesto

Ghaemiyeh Computer Research Institute of Isfahan in order to facilitate and accelerate the accessibility of researchers to the books and tools of research, in the field of Islamic science, and regarding the multiplicity and dispersion of active centers in this field

and numerous and inaccessible sources by a mere scientific intention and far from any kind of social, political, tribal and personal prejudices and currents, based on performing a project in the shape of (management of produced and published works from all Shia centers) tries to provide a rich and free collection of books and research papers for the experts, and helpful contents and discussions for the educated generation and all classes of people interested in reading, with various formats in the .cyberspace

:Our Goals are

(propagating the culture and teachings of Thaqalayn (Quran and Ahlulbayt p.b.u.t-

encouraging the populace particularly the youth in investigating the religious issues-

replacing useful contents with useless ones in the cellphones, tablets and computers-

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paving the way for the publications and authors to digitize their works-

:Policies

acting according to the legal licenses-

relationship with similar centers-

avoiding parallel working-

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mentioning the sources-

.It's obvious that all the responsibilities are due to the author

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Also producing four markets named "Ghaemiyeh Book Market" with Android, IOS,- WINDOWS PHONE and WINDOWS editions

:Appreciation

We would appreciate the centers, institutes, publications, authors and all honorable .friends who contributed their help and data to us to reach the holy goal we follow

:Address of the central office
Isfahan, Abdorazaq St, Haj Mohammad JafarAbadei Alley, Shahid Mohammad HasanTavakkoly Alley, Number plate ۱۲۹, first floor
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